

NATIONAL CUSTOMERS SERVICE AWARDS

The National Customer Awards program was the result of a cooperative agreement between DOL/ETA and National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA -- formerly ICESA). This program was developed in 1994 to provide an incentive to the State Employment Security Agencies (SESA) for the development of innovative projects that represent the highest quality of service delivery. These Awards are meant to recognize projects, services, and programs that are the best of what the Wagner-Peyser Act and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) are challenging States to achieve. With the implementation of the WIA, we are expecting to see projects that will showcase models for the new Workforce Environment.

The goals and accomplishments of this program are:

- / To recognize successful, innovative State and local achievement and the staff who provides high-quality services to customers;
- / To identify State and local initiatives on which to model and develop national programs; and
- / To publicize outstanding State and local projects and activities that effectively respond to critical workforce security and development issues

There are four categories in which the projects can be submitted:

- / **The Architect of Change Award** - -recognizes innovative projects that present new ideas, new methods of service delivery, techniques for reaching a new market or a new product altogether;
- / **The Pyramid Prize** - - focuses on the collaboration between agencies to improve services to customers by successfully integrating programs, funds, customers and other resources;
- / **The Compass Award** - - showcases the most innovative use of cutting-edge tools and/or technology to improve customer access and to increase satisfaction with the services delivery;
- / **Building a World Class Workforce -- Professional Development and Capacity Building** - - This is a people award for projects that effectively build workforce capacity. The winners must demonstrate service quality and customer satisfaction.

Below are the winners from the Annual NASWA Conference in September 2000 with a brief description of each:

ARCHITECT OF CHANGE AWARD

State of Washington: *WorkFirst Post Employment Services*

The Washington State WorkFirst Post-Employment Labor Exchange (WPLEX) utilizes a toll-free, call-center approach to provide former welfare recipients with pro-active, aggressive post-employment services to help them stay employed and increase their wages to become more economically self-sufficient. The Washington State demonstrated that call centers can reach far more people than would be reached by calling them into the office. In less than two years, this program has resulted in tens of thousands of successful contacts to help clients increase their earnings, including referrals to colleges for additional training and placements in better jobs.

COMPASS AWARD

State of New York State: *CareerZone*

The New York State Department of Labor's CareerZone System (www.nycareerzone.org) provides a wealth of customized exploration information and services targeted to youth. Users can tap into a myriad of resources such as in-depth education and financial aid information, labor market information, an interactive resume builder, up-to-date job listings, and 200 career videos of real people at work. CareerZone utilizes the new O*NET Database to provide occupational information for over 1,100 jobs and organizes the information around broad career clusters to make exploration easier. Users can choose a cluster, search for a specific job, or use a self-assessment tool designed to relate career cluster, search for a specific job, or use a self-assessment tool designed to relate career interest to potential jobs. Users can easily print information or save it to a new online career portfolio account.

COMPASS AWARD

State of North Carolina: *Trade Claims Intranet*

The Trade Claims INTRANET Project provides the option of electronic filing of both initial and continued Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) claims, which will result in timely payment checks delivered to the claimant. Prior to implementation of this project, local office staff completed eligibility paperwork and submitted it to the state office for processing. After the claim was established, claimants were required to mail weekly documentation for manual claims. TAA/NAFTA claims were frustrated with the manual claims processing system. Customers were accustomed to filing their Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits weekly by telephone through an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and receiving their check within a day or two. Now the agency provides a seamless transition from the regular to Trade Claims. The timeliness and consistency of payments between the two programs is identical.

BUILDING A WORLD CLASS WORKFORCE - - CAPACITY BUILDING

State of Indiana: Lifelong Learning Institute

The Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) was established in February 1998 to create a comprehensive approach to staff training and career development for staff of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and its partner organizations. The intent is to expand and improve services to customers through better trained, more efficient, and more knowledgeable staff.

The National Customer Service Awards winners for 2001 will be presented at the Annual NASWA Conference which will be held this year in Oklahoma September 17 - 20, 2001. The **“Call to Nominations Letter”** was sent to the SESAs, One-Stop and WIA liaison on April 30, 2001. This letter provides the necessary criteria, format and deadlines for the proposals to be submitted.

If you have any questions about this program, please contact Gay Gilbert at (202)693-3428 or Dorrie Russell at (202)693-2781. There are a few award catalogue booklets left that provide more detailed information on the 2000 National Customer Service Award winners. If you wish to obtain a copy, please call Dorrie Russell at the number listed above.